

EPA's Brownfields Grant Competition

Tips and Tricks for Writing a Successful Brownfields Proposal

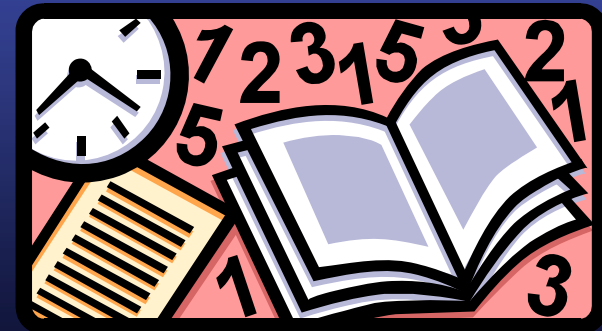


The United States Environmental Protection Agency Region 6



How Ranking Evaluation Works

- Points are evenly distributed for each question within a criterion
- Points are **earned**, not deducted
- Follow the guideline format for your answers
- Make your proposal **unique**
- No Acronyms!!



Brownfields Guidelines

Assessment Grant Program Ranking Criteria



Assessment Proposal Scoring

132 Points Total

- A – Budget (10 Points)
- B – Community Need (15 Points)
- C – Site Selection Process (6 Points)
- D – Sustainable Reuse of Brownfields (12 Points)
- E – Creation/Preservation of Greenspace/Open Space (5 Points)
- F – Pre-Award Community Notification (12 Points)
- G – Community Involvement (16 Points)
- H – Reduction of Threats to Human Health/Environment (26 Points)
- I – Leveraging of Additional Resources (10 Points)
- J – Programmatic Capability (20 Points)



Assessment Ranking Criteria

Budget (10 points)

****Tips****

- ***Make it Count, This is the First Thing the Reviewer Sees!***
- Use sample format
- Minimize programmatic costs (Personnel, Fringe, Supplies)
- Maximize contractual costs for actual assessments
- No equipment costs
- Include short narrative descriptions
- Include travel funds to attend national Brownfields conferences and regional workshops.

| | Task 1 | Task 2 |
|-------------|--------|--------|
| Personnel | | |
| Fringe | | |
| Travel | | |
| Equipment | | |
| Supplies | | |
| Contractual | | |
| Other | | |
| Total | | |



Assessment Ranking Criteria

Community Need (15 Points)

Tips

- Describe the *specific* impacts of brownfields on your community
- Describe how community will benefit from redevelopment specific to Master Plan(s) and project proposed
- Provide demographics for city and targeted area and compare them to state and national stats. Identify the source for your information.
- Do not assume that “everyone” knows about the factory that closed down and put everyone out of work. Tell the story.



Assessment Ranking Criteria

Community Need (15 Points)

Tricks!

- Question 1 – Description of Targeted Community
 - Be careful about any disconnect between your statistics and the focus area of your project. If your statistics were for the entire community, and your projects are in your most well-to-do area, the reviewers will pick up on this discrepancy very quickly.



Assessment Ranking Criteria

Community Need (15 Points)

Tricks!

- Question 2 – Community Benefit
 - It is most likely that your proposal will be community-wide. Be clear who is the targeted community. Are you considering a focus on one particular area or neighborhood?
 - Be clear about benefits. Discuss the specific environmental, social and economic benefits that the community will enjoy if the brownfields sites are redeveloped.



Assessment Ranking Criteria

Community Need (15 Points)

Tricks!

- Question 3 – Impact of Brownfields on Community
 - What is the impact? Provide details regarding the size, number and location of brownfields sites throughout your community. Avoid a response that indicates that you just don't know.
 - Describe the negative impacts that contaminated properties have had on your community.



Assessment Ranking Criteria

Site Selection Process (6 Points)

Tips

- Remember that reviewers are looking for community input into the site selection process
- Proposals need to identify what specific site selection criteria your community will be utilizing (developer interest, community need, location, potential for greenspace, etc.)
- Respond to the access issue – provide a 'Plan B'



Assessment Ranking Criteria

Sustainable Reuse (12 Points)

Tips

- Respond to each of the sub-criteria separately
- Describe your community's existing reuse plans (strategy, sustainability concepts, master plans, area-wide brownfields prevention)
- Make the connection between your master plans and each of the three proposal criteria
- Highlight any creative or innovative reuse of infrastructure
- If site specific proposal, provide specific details for all infrastructure (streets, water, sewer, electricity, sidewalks, public transit)
- Try to address each 'goal' listed in the proposal in your response (green buildings, housing, smart growth, etc)



Assessment Ranking Criteria

Greenspace (5 Points)

Tips

- Provide details (generalities viewed negatively).
- Consider adding a greenspace component to the specific site/project or targeted area (community parks, open space, wetlands).
- By default, if you're redeveloping brownfields, you're likely preserving greenspace. However, a patch of green in a parking lot or a lawn will not get you points.
- Be specific about any planning documents or regulations that will guide your community in preserving greenspace.
- Non-profit uses are important here, too (YMCA, schools, faith-based uses, etc.).



Assessment Ranking Criteria

Community Notification (12 Points)

Tips

- Provide details (may include dates, agenda, number of meetings, attendee lists, etc) of how local community has been and/or will be **notified** of the proposed grant activities
- Explain why notification methods described fit your community
- Allow minimum of 2 weeks for public comment
- What are you going to do with any comments received?
- This section should agree with Section G



Assessment Ranking Criteria

Community Involvement (16 Points)

Tips

- Provide details (dates, agenda, number of meetings, attendee lists) of how local community has been and will be **notified** AND **engaged** in the decision making process
- Diversity of partners considered favorably (faith-based groups, environmental groups, civic organizations, business groups, non-profit economic development corporations, etc.). Partnerships may be formal or informal.
- Provide list of representative groups/individuals who will be involved (see example below)
- Ensure that your community partners have been given a chance to review the draft proposal and have input on your written proposal
- **EPA will check all references.**

For Example:

| | | | | |
|--|-----------|--------------|--|---|
| Downtown Development Association (local non-profit) | Ann Jones | 123.456.7890 | Jones.ann@brownfields.xxx | Reviewed and provided comment on site selection criterion |
|--|-----------|--------------|--|---|



Assessment Ranking Criteria

Reduction of Threats (26 Points)

Tricks!

- Question 1 – Identification of Threats
 - For community-wide proposals, discuss your intention to use funds to identify sites and possible environmental and health risks.
 - If Site Specific Proposal, provide sensitive population statistics specific to site area
 - *Specifically* describe contaminants of concern and impact
 - If the proposal is for petroleum funding, mention petroleum as the contaminant of concern!
 - Be careful about the disconnect between risk and your sites. Don't talk about general risks for the whole community if you have a focused target area.



Assessment Ranking Criteria

Reduction of Threats (26 Points)

Tricks!

- Question 2 - Partnerships
 - Utilize resources at the state and local Departments of Health
 - Discuss **BOTH** state and local department of health involvement in your proposal – **USE POSITIVE VERBS**
 - Explain role and relationships of the state environmental authority and Voluntary Cleanup Programs, as well as Local/County/State health agencies



Assessment Ranking Criteria

Leveraging of Resources (10 Points)

Tips

- Show project/target area fully thought out, planned, and funded – except environmental
- Demonstrate federal investment potential return
- Specifically list funds already obligated and then funds you plan to seek
- Commit local funding (actual funds or in-kind)
- Use positive verbs: “we are working,” “we will commit.”



Assessment Ranking Criteria

Programmatic Capability (20 Points)

Tips

- Explain past history of managing *federal* funds, including amounts (see example below)
- Who do you have in place with grant experience?
- Describe procurement processes
- Any Adverse Audits? – must answer this one
- *Specifically* describe your success with past brownfields grants – show you will hit the ground running with more \$\$

For Example:

| | | | | |
|---------------------------|-------------|--|----------------|---|
| US Dept of Transportation | \$2,000,000 | Assessment of contamination along Federal highways | Awarded Oct 03 | Found that contamination was present at over 60% of local interstates |
|---------------------------|-------------|--|----------------|---|

Brownfields Guidelines

Cleanup and RLF Grant Programs
Ranking Criteria



Cleanup Proposal Scoring

127 Points Total

- A – Budget (10 Points)
- B – Community Need (15 Points)
- C – Sustainable Reuse of Brownfields (12 Points)
- D – Creation and/or Preservation of Greenspace/Open Space (5 Points)
- E – Community Notification (12 Points)
- F – Community Involvement (16 Points)
- F – Reduction of Threats to Human Health and the Environment (27 Points)
- G – Leveraging of Additional Resources (10 Points)
- H – Programmatic Capability (20 Points)



Cleanup Ranking Criteria Budget (10 Points)

Tips

- ***Make it Count, This is the First Thing the Reviewer Sees!***
- Use sample format
- Minimize programmatic costs (personnel, fringe, supplies)
- Remember: Administrative costs are ineligible!
- Maximize contractual costs for actual cleanup activity
- No equipment costs
- Include short narrative descriptions
- Include travel funds to attend national Brownfields conferences and regional workshops
- If requesting both hazardous and petroleum funding, submit two separate budgets
- Only show EPA cleanup funds in budget table
- Don't show more than 20% for the cost share



Cleanup Ranking Criteria

Budget (10 Points)

Sample Cleanup Budget

| Budget Categories (programmatic costs only) | Project Tasks | | | |
|--|-----------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| | Community Involvement | Cleanup Planning | Site Cleanup | Total |
| Personnel | \$2,000 | \$2,000 | \$4,000 | \$8,000 |
| Fringe Benefits | \$500 | \$500 | \$1,000 | \$2,000 |
| Travel¹ | \$500 | \$1,500 | \$1,000 | \$3,000 |
| Equipment | | | | \$0 |
| Supplies | \$500 | \$500 | | \$1,000 |
| Contractual² | \$5,000 | \$6,000 | \$215,000 | \$226,000 |
| Other | | | | \$0 |
| Federal Share | \$6,000 | \$8,000 | \$186,000 | 200,000 |
| Cost Share | \$2,500 | \$2,500 | \$35,000 | 40,000 |
| Total | \$8,500 | \$10,500 | \$221,000 | \$240,000 |

¹ Travel to brownfield-related training conferences is an acceptable use of these grant funds.

² Applicants must comply with the procurement procedures contained in 40 CFR 31.36, or for non-profits, with 40 CFR 30.40 through 30.48.



Cleanup Ranking Criteria

Community Need (15 Points)

Tips

- Describe *specific* impacts of brownfields on your community
- Describe how community will benefit from redevelopment specific to master plan and project proposed – *in detail*
- Provide demographics for site and compare to city, state and national stats. Identify the source of your information.
- Do not assume that “everyone” knows about the factory that closed down and put everyone out of work. Tell the story.



Cleanup Ranking Criteria

Community Need (15 Points)

Tricks!

- Question 1 – Description of Targeted Community
 - Be careful about any disconnect between your statistics and the focus area of your project. If your statistics were for the entire community, and your projects are in your most well-to-do area, the reviewers will pick up on this discrepancy very quickly.



Cleanup Ranking Criteria

Community Need (15 Points)

Tricks!

- Question 2 – Community Benefit
 - What are “benefits”? They can be economic as well as environmental or social. Examples are improvements to standard of living, reconnecting a disconnected neighborhood, or solving a lingering problem such as a lack of recreational facilities. Explore the wide range of possible benefits your community will receive from this effort.



Cleanup Ranking Criteria

Community Need (15 Points)

Tricks!

- Question 3 – Impact of Brownfields on Community
 - What is the impact? Provide details regarding the size, number and location of brownfields sites throughout your community. Avoid a response that indicates that you just don't know.
 - Describe the negative impacts that contaminated properties have had on your community.



Cleanup Ranking Criteria

Sustainable Reuse (12 Points)

Tips

- Respond to each of the sub-criteria separately
- Describe your community's existing reuse plans (strategy, sustainability concepts, master plans, area-wide brownfields prevention)
- Make the connection between your master plans and each of the three criteria
- Provide specific details for all infrastructure reuse (streets, water, sewer, electricity, sidewalks, public transit)
- Try to address each 'goal' listed in the proposal in your response (green buildings, housing, smart growth, etc). Tie them to your site's future redevelopment.
- Because this is a site-specific proposal, you should be able to provide specifics regarding the sustainability of your site!



Cleanup Ranking Criteria

Greenspace (5 Points)

Tips

- Provide Details (generalities viewed negatively).
- Consider adding a meaningful greenspace component to project (community park, open space, wetlands)
- By default, if you're redeveloping brownfields, you're likely preserving greenspace. However, a patch of green in a parking lot or a lawn will not get you points.
- Be specific about any planning documents or regulations that will guide your community in preserving greenspace.
- Non-profit uses are important here, too (YMCA, schools, faith-based uses, etc.).



Cleanup Ranking Criteria

Community Notification (12 Points)

Tips

- Provide details (dates, agenda, number of meetings, attendee lists) of how local community has been and/or will be **notified** of the proposed cleanup activity
- Explain why notification methods described fit your community
- Allow minimum of 2 weeks for public comment
- What are you going to do with any comments received?
- This section should agree with Section G



Cleanup Ranking Criteria

Community Involvement (16 Points)

Tips

- Provide details (dates, agenda, number of meetings, attendee lists) of how local community has been and will be **notified** AND **engaged** in the decision making process
- Diversity of partners considered favorably (faith-based groups, environmental groups, civic organizations, business groups, non-profit economic development corporations, etc.). Partnerships may be formal or informal.
- Provide list of representative groups/individuals who will be involved (see example below)
- Ensure that your community partners have been given a chance to review the draft proposal and have input on your written proposal
- **EPA will check all references.**

For Example:

| | | | | |
|--|-----------|--------------|--|---|
| Downtown Development Association (local non-profit) | Ann Jones | 123.456.7890 | Jones.ann@brownfields.xxx | Reviewed and provided comment on site selection criterion |
|--|-----------|--------------|--|---|



Cleanup Ranking Criteria

Reduction of Threats (27 Points)

Tricks!

- Question 1 – Identification of Threats
 - Critical points to be addressed:
 - Media contaminated (soil, groundwater, air)
 - Population exposed (children, elderly, pregnant women)
 - Exposure routes (inhalation, dermal contact, ingestion)
 - Types of contaminants (metals, VOCs, PCBs)
 - Impacts of these contaminants (cancer, asthma and birth defects)
 - If the proposal is for petroleum funding, mention petroleum as the contaminant of concern!
 - Link site with associated risk!



Cleanup Ranking Criteria

Reduction of Threats (27 Points)

Tricks!

- Question 2 - Partnerships
 - Utilize resources at the state and local Departments of Health.
 - Discuss **BOTH** state and local Departments of Health involvement in your proposal – **USE POSITIVE VERBS.**
 - Explain role and relationships of the state environmental authority and the Voluntary Cleanup Program, as well as local/county/state health agencies



Cleanup Ranking Criteria

Reduction of Threats (27 Points)

Tricks!

- Question 3 – Cleanup Plan
 - Describe how your cleanup plan will address these risks - be specific.
 - i.e. soil will be excavated in a controlled fashion which will eliminate the threat)
 - Provide volumes or areas if known
 - Identify the cleanup costs and make sure you have a plan to complete the cleanup.



Cleanup Ranking Criteria Leveraging (10 Points)

Tips

- Show project/target area fully thought out, planned, and funded – except environmental
- Demonstrate federal investment potential return
- Specifically list funds already obligated and then funds you plan to seek
- Commit local funding (actual funds or in-kind)
- Use positive verbs: “we are working,” “we will commit.”



Cleanup Ranking Criteria

Programmatic Capability (20 Points)

Tips

- Explain past history of managing *federal* funds, including amounts (see example below)
- Who do you have in place with grant experience?
- Describe procurement processes
- Any Adverse Audits? – must answer this one
- *Specifically* describe your success with past brownfields grants – show you will hit the ground running with more \$\$

For Example:

| | | | | |
|---------------------------|-------------|--|----------------|---|
| US Dept of Transportation | \$2,000,000 | Assessment of contamination along Federal highways | Awarded Oct 03 | Found that contamination was present at over 60% of local interstates |
|---------------------------|-------------|--|----------------|---|

Brownfields Guidelines

RLF-Specific Ranking Criteria



Revolving Loan Fund Proposal Scoring

150 Points Total

- A – Budget (10 Points)
- B – Community Need (15 Points)
- C – Business Plan for RLF Program (24 Points)
- D – Sustainable Reuse of Brownfields (12 Points)
- E – Creation and/or Preservation of Greenspace/Open Space (5 Points)
- F – Pre-Award Community Notification (12 Points)
- G – Community Involvement (16 Points)
- H – Reduction of Threats to Human Health and the Environment (26 Points)
- I – Leveraging of Additional Resources (10 Points)
- J – Programmatic Capability (20 Points)



RLF Ranking Criteria

Budget (10 Points)

Tips

- The RLF funding can be utilized for both loans and subgrants. Loans must constitute at least 60% of your budget. Applicant must submit two separate budgets showing loan pool budget tasks and subgrant pool budget tasks.
- If you are applying for both hazardous substances and petroleum RLF funding, this would require **FOUR** budgets.
- Don't put all the "programmatic" costs under the loan budget. Show it under the subgrant budget as well.
- **Make sure your budget adds up!**



RLF Ranking Criteria

Budget (10 Points)

Sample RLF Budget - Loans

| Budget Categories | Project Tasks for Loans (at least 60 % of amount requested) | | | | |
|--------------------------------|---|----------------|-----------------|------------------|------------------|
| (programmatic costs only) | Community Involvement | Marketing RLF | Operating RLF | Site Cleanup | Total |
| Personnel | \$5,000 | \$5,000 | \$10,000 | \$10,000 | \$30,000 |
| Fringe Benefits | \$500 | \$500 | \$1,000 | \$1,000 | \$3,000 |
| Travel¹ | | | \$2,000 | | \$2,000 |
| Equipment² | | | | | \$0 |
| Supplies | | \$2,500 | \$2,500 | | \$5,000 |
| Contractual³ | \$5,000 | | \$5,000 | \$10,000 | \$20,000 |
| Loans | | | | \$540,000 | \$540,000 |
| Other | | | | | |
| Subtotal: | \$10,500 | \$8,000 | \$20,500 | \$561,000 | \$600,000 |

¹ Travel to brownfield-related training conferences is an acceptable use of these grant funds.

² Applicants must comply with the procurement procedures contained in 40 CFR 31.36, or for non-profits, with 40 CFR 30.40 through 30.48.



RLF Ranking Criteria

Budget (10 Points)

Sample RLF Budget - Subgrants

| Budget Categories | Project Tasks for Subgrants (no more than 40% of amount requested) | | | | |
|---------------------------|--|---------------|---------------|--------------|-------------|
| (programmatic costs only) | Community Involvement | Marketing RLF | Operating RLF | Site Cleanup | Total |
| Personnel | \$2,500 | \$2,500 | \$5,000 | \$5,000 | \$15,000 |
| Fringe Benefits | \$250 | \$250 | \$500 | \$500 | \$1,500 |
| Travel | | | \$1,000 | | \$1,000 |
| Equipment | | | | | \$0 |
| Supplies | | \$1,250 | \$1,250 | | \$2,500 |
| Contractual ³ | \$2,500 | | \$2,500 | \$5,000 | \$10,000 |
| Loans | | | | \$370,000 | \$370,000 |
| Other (specify) _____ | | | | | |
| Subtotal: | \$5,250 | \$4,000 | \$10,250 | \$380,500 | \$400,000 |
| Total | \$15,750 | \$12,000 | \$30,750 | \$941,500 | \$1,000,000 |
| Cost Share | \$20,000 | \$10,000 | \$20,000 | \$150,000 | \$1,200,00 |



RLF Ranking Criteria

Business Plan (24 Points)

Tricks!

- Question 1 – Business Concept
 - Explain how your RLF program will be organized
 - Provide examples of potential projects, loan structures, rates, repayment term options, etc
 - Include a 5 - 10 year loan subgrant timeline
 - Describe other programs and incentives you have to compliment your RLF program such as TIF, EZ/EC benefits, tax credits, etc
 - Show how your RLF program will provide long-term availability of loan/subgrant funds
 - If you plan to offer subgrants, tying them to a loan helps to preserve the loan pool
 - Demonstrate that you will be ready to open your doors for business within a few months of receiving the grant



RLF Ranking Criteria

Business Plan (24 Points)

Tricks!

- Question 2 – Target Market
 - Describe your target market and discuss any marketing you have already accomplished
 - Discuss properties or areas you are targeting or intend to target
 - Identify the range of potential customers (e.g., muni, non-profit, for-profit) and discuss their different needs. How will you market your program to these groups differently?
 - Explain sources of your information - Brownfield inventories, state lists, redevelopment areas, etc



RLF Ranking Criteria

Business Plan (24 Points)

Tricks!

- Question 3 – Site Selection Process
 - In describing your site and borrower/subgrant recipient selection process, remember that reviewers are looking for community input into the selection process.
 - Proposals need to identify what specific site selection criteria your community will be utilizing (developer interest, community need, location, etc.).
 - Discuss your plan to offer subgrants and explain how you will incorporate the four considerations into your site selection process.



RLF Ranking Criteria

Business Plan (24 Points)

Tricks!

- Question 4 - Management
 - Describe the personnel who will work on your program.
 - If using your own staff – describe their qualifications and/or attach resumes.
 - If using other departments and/or agencies – describe their qualifications, your relationship with them, and who will do what.
 - Describe your organization and how it will fulfill the financial, legal and record keeping requirements.
 - Explain how you will ensure safe cleanups and prudent lending practices.
 - Describe any outside help (other organizations or contractors) you will use to manage your RLF program.



RLF Ranking Criteria Leveraging (10 Points)

Tips

- Describe any and all other sources of funds including borrower/subgrant recipient resources.

Tricks!

- Question 1 – Grantee Commitments
 - Explain how you will acquire and maintain the staff and/or outside assistance you described in Ranking Criteria C - Question 4.



RLF Ranking Criteria

Programmatic Capability (20 Points)

Tricks!

- Question 1 – Ability to Manage Grant
 - Use this criteria to identify key staff who will manage your RLF program.
 - Explain your relationship with any institution or individual from which or from whom you will acquire services for fund management and/or environmental expertise.
 - Describe the type of agreement you will use (contract or subgrant) to attain these services.



So...Where do I begin?

- Draft your proposal!
- Contact EPA Region 6 with eligibility questions!
- Contact partners for assistance in preparing and/or reviewing your proposal!
- **Contact State if applying for petroleum!**
- Set up public meeting!
- Put notice in paper!
- Get State acknowledgement letter!





General Pearls Of Wisdom...

- ★ Help the Reviewer to Remember Your Proposal – What Makes Yours Stand Out from the Crowd?
- ★ Detail Whenever Possible - Avoid Excessive Generalities
- ★ Write a Good But Brief Cover Letter Summarizing Your Project
- ★ Follow the Order and Outline of the Guidelines *Exactly*
- ★ Remember – Proposals EARN points – the reviewer starts at 0 and works up

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EPA National Brownfields website: www.epa.gov/brownfields



Acronyms

| | | | |
|----------------|--|--------------|---|
| B&W | Black & White | FY | Fiscal Year |
| CERCLA | Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act | HQ | Headquarters |
| ESA | Environmental Site Assessment | HUD | Department of Housing and Urban Development |
| EZ/EC | Empowerment Zone/Enterprise Community | LUST | Leaking Underground Storage Tank |
| FWPCA | Federal Water Pollution Control Act | NPDES | National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System |
| | | NPL | National Priorities List |
| | | OPA | Oil Pollution Act |
| | | OMB | Office of Management & Budget |